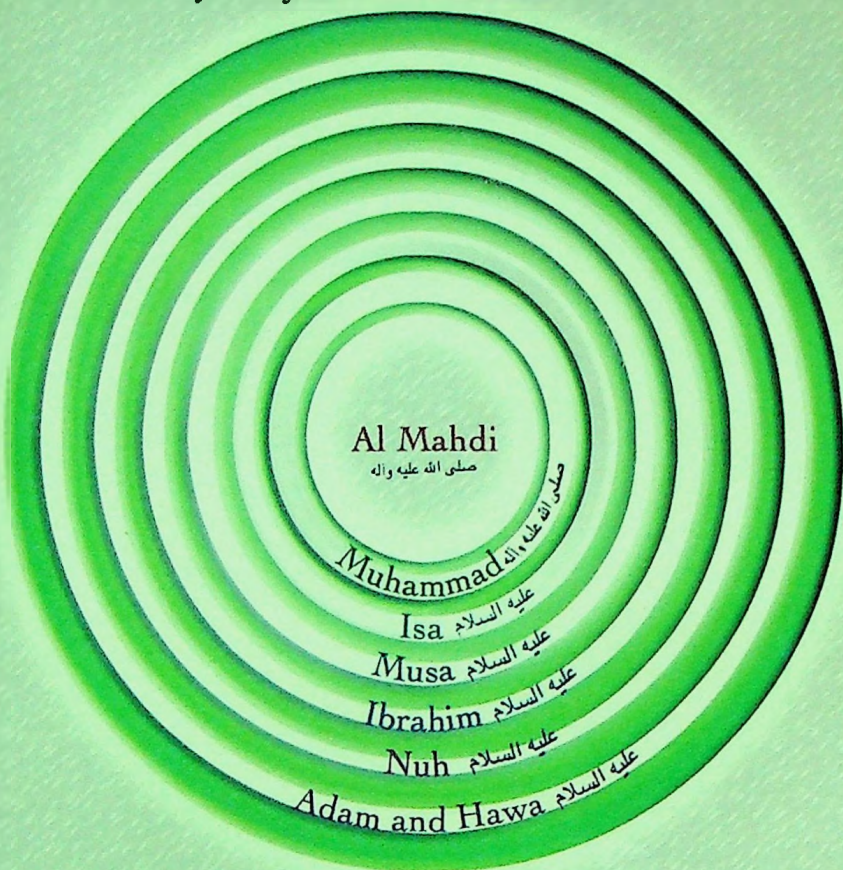


بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

SEEING BY THE LIGHT OF THE MOON THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD ﷺ

By Shaykh Ahmed Abdur Rashid



Sixth in a seven part series:

ULU-L-AZIM THE GREAT ONES



The Circle Group
1329 Prosperity Drive, Bedford, VA 24523
www.circlegroup.org

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THE LIGHT
OF THE MOON**

**THE PROPHET
MUHAMMAD ﷺ**

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Surah al Fatiha

AL-HAMDU-LI-LLÄHI, MUQALIBA-L-QULÛBI
 WA-L-ABSÄR.
 ALLÄHUMMA THABIT QULÛBANA
 °ALA SIRÄTIKA-L-QAWIM,
 WA-J°ALNÄ LI-WAJHIKA MUTTAJIHIN,
 WA SALLI °ALA-Sh-ShAFI°I-L-HABIB,
 RAHMATIL-°ÄLAMIN, WA MANÄRI-L-NAJIYIN,
 WA MARSÄ-L-°ARIFIN.

Praise be to Allah ﷻ,
 the Turner of the hearts and sight.
 O Allah, fix our hearts on the best of Your ways,
 and make us face You in our way,
 and bestow blessings on the beloved intercessor,
 the mercy of all the worlds, the lighthouse of the survivors,
 the harbor of the knowers.

YÄ MAWJÛDAN °INDA-Sh-ShADÄÄ°IDI
 YÄ KHAFIYYA-L-LUTFI, YÄ LATÎFA-S-SUN°I
 YÄ HALIMAN, LÄ YA°JILUQDI HÄJATI
 BI-RAHMATIKA, YÄ ARHAMA-R-RAHIMIN.
 SUBHÄNAKA °ALÄ HILMIKA BA°DA °ILMIK.
 SUBHÄNAKA °ALÄ °AFWIKA BA°DA QUDRATIK.

O Existent One, O Thou who are Present in all difficulties.
 O Thou of Hidden Kindness, of Subtle making.
 O Gentle One, Who does not hasten, fulfill my need,
 with Thy Mercy, O most Merciful of the Mercifuls.
 Glory be to Thee, on Thy Grace, after Thy Knowledge.
 Glory be to Thee, on Thy forgiveness, after Thy Power.

Lecture by Shaykh Ahmed Abdu-r-Rashid
 at the Zaawiyah of
 Shaykh Nooruddeen Durkee
 Charlottesville, VA
 23 June 2013
 14 Sha°baan 1434

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Tald'a 'l-badru 'alaynā
 Min thaniyyāti 'l-wadā'
 Wajaba 'l-shukru 'alaynā
 Mā da'ā li-l-lāhi dā'
 'ayyuba 'l-mab'ūthu finā
 Ji'ta bi-l-'amri 'l-mutā'
 Ji'ta sharrafta 'l-madinah
 Marhaban yā khayra dā'

O the white moon rose over us
 From the valley of al-Wadā',
 And we owe it to show gratefulness
 Where the call is to Allah.
 O you who were raised among us
 Coming with a word to be obeyed
 You have brought to this city nobleness
 Welcome best caller to the way.

Allahumma Salli 'alaa Sayyidina Muhammad-in
 As-Saabiqi li'l-khalqi nuruhu
 Wa Rahmatullil 'aalameena dhuhuruhu
 'Adada man madhaa min khalqiqa wa man baqiya
 Wa man sa'ida minhum wa man shaqiya
 Salaatan tastagriqu'l 'adda wa tuhitu bi'l haddi
 Salaatan laa gaayata lahaa wa laa muntahaa wa langidha'a
 Salaatan daaimatan bidawaamika
 Wa 'alaa aalihi wa sabbihi wa sallim tasleeman mithla dhaalik

O Allah! Bestow blessings on our master Muhammad
 whose light was created first,
 and whose appearance is a mercy for all the worlds,
 as many times as the number of Your creations past and yet to come
 among those that are blessed and those that are unfortunate;
 such blessings that are unlimited and unbounded,
 countless, endless, never finishing;
 such blessings as everlasting as You,
 and on his family and companions,
 and in the same manner complete salutations as well.

Assalamu 'alaika Yaa Rasul'Allah
 Assalamu 'alaika Yaa Kheerata'llahi min khalqihi
 Assalamu 'alaika Yaa Habib'Allah
 Assalamu 'alaika Yaa Sayyida'l Mursaleen wa Khaatama'n Nabiyyeen
 Assalamu 'alaika wa 'alaa aalika wa as'haabika
 Wa ahli baytika wa 'alan Nabiyyeen-a wa saairi's saaliheen
 Ash-hadu annaka ballaghta'r Risalah
 Wa addayta'l amaanah wa nasabta'l ummah
 Fajazaak'Allahu 'annaa afdhala maa jazaa Rasulan 'an ummatihi

Salaams on you, O Messenger of Allah.
 Salaams on you, O Allah's choicest one in all His creation.
 Salaams on you, O the Beloved of Allah.
 Salaams on you, O the leader of all the Messengers
 and the last of the Prophets.
 Salaams on you and on your family and your companions
 and your household and on all the prophets
 and on all well-known pious people.
 I bear witness that you completed your duties
 as the Messenger of Allah,
 fulfilled your trusts, and sincerely advised your community.
 May Allah reward you on our behalf better than
 the reward that any Messenger received on behalf of his community.

*Rabbi Faj'al Mujtama'naa
Ghaayatuh Husnu'l Khitaami
Wa'tinaa Maa Qad Sa'alnaa
Min 'Ataayaaka'l Jisaami*

*Wa'krimi'l Arwaaha Minnaa
Biliqaa Khairi'l Anaami
Wabligbi'l Mukhtaara 'Anaa
Min Salaatin wa Salaami*

O Lord! Let the aim of our gathering
Be to achieve a felicitous end
And fulfill all our wishes
From Your immense bounties

And honour the souls of those who belong to us
With a meeting with the best of mankind.
May our blessings and salutations
Reach the Chosen One.

*Marhaban bi'l Mustafa Yaa Mas'halaa
Mas'halan fee Marhaban fee Mas'halaa*

Welcome to Mustafa, O gentle one!
Most cordial welcome in all humility.

*Yaa Shafi 'al-Waraa Salaamun 'alaiik
Yaa Nabiyya'l Huda Salaamun 'alaiik*

O intercessor (on Judgment Day), salutations on you.
O the Prophet of guidance, salutations on you.

INTRODUCTION

Asalaamu alaykum wa rahmatu-Llaahi wa barakatuh!

I would like to begin today by speaking about the Nur-i-Muhammad. Understanding the significance of the Nur-i-Muhammad is critical to understanding our life, our purpose, and our responsibilities. Indeed, it is critical to understanding Islam and the role of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in both our individual lives and in the collective history of humanity. While many think they can understand or explain the Nur-i-Muhammad, there is a kind of mystical veil over this unique reality. I would say that very few really experience the reality of the Nur-i-Muhammad, beyond a rudimentary and, at times, emotional understanding and visceral response. To grasp the mystical as well as the fundamental reality requires attention (*raqaba*), observation, introspection, heeding the hints (*ishaaraat*), and the signs and symbols (*aayaat and 'alam*) that abound in that light.

Literally, Nur-i-Muhammad means the Light of Muhammad as the prophetic light, the first light, or the initiating light. The references to it and the focus on it began about 300 years after the death of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ by people like Tustari, and Mansoor al-Hallaj, and Shaykh al-Akbar, Ibn Araby. When we begin to understand the meaning of this light, we can begin to understand why the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is the seal of the prophets, the first and the last, the bridge between all the previous traditions and all the future teachings. As the Turkish poet and Sufi, Aziz Mahmud Hudayi, wrote in the 16th Century:

*Without a doubt, everything has been created from the secret treasure.
For the sea of love rose and moved with the winds of love.*

It is the light of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and Allah's love for him that preceded creation. The light is nothing other than the first light of Allah's creation, *tajalli* (lucent manifestation), as it comes out of that Eternal Source of light. The early Sufic mystic, Baghdadi Tustari, wrote this about the essence of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as an aspect of the pre-creative column of light.

God Most High, when He wished to create Muhammad ﷺ manifested some of His light. And when it attained the veil of majesty, it bowed down in prayer before Allah. Allah created from that portion of prayer a great column like a glass of light as both his interior and exterior. In it is the 'ayn, the very being/ essence/ source/ eye of Muhammad ﷺ that you find him. He stood in service before the Lord of the two worlds for a thousand, thousand years with a disposition and attitude of faith, the beholding of faith, the unveiling of certitude, and the witness of the Lord.

Muhammad ﷺ is the perfect manifestation of this pre-eternal light, which is the first cause of creation and the perfect glorification of Allah's essence, because he is the perfect servant, having stood for a million years, expressed as one thousand, thousand ('alf 'alf) years in service to this Light—bowing to this Eternal Light, glorifying the Light. The Prophet ﷺ existed before, in the pre-eternity, in the form of light. If one can imagine a kind of barrier of darkness, the dark energy or matter that makes up most of our universes and galaxies, and the moment it was pierced by the first lumen, the first speck of eternal light, this was the beginning of the Nur-i-Muhammad. Before that, on the other side he stood and prostrated before it for a million years, which is a metaphor for countless years. The Prophet ﷺ existed before, in this pre-eternity, in the form of light, himself. When the darkness was penetrated by that first lumen, that first speck of eternal light was the moment that created time, and hence the opportunity to turn back to remember. Without time, we cannot remember and cannot make the *dhikr*. *Dhikr* is born in the moment that time is born so that we can remember.

As you might remember from a previous *dars*, I have spoken on the morphology of the word *dhikr* and the significance of its meaning, not only as “to remember” but also “to penetrate.” Here is this barrier. The force of this light, Nur-i-Muhammad penetrates. And the moment it penetrates, *dhikr* and the capacity to remember is born. Think of the moment of conception and what its dynamic creates, that union where two elements, created by Allah ﷻ, reunite to create another iteration of ONE. This luminescent union is our model and template for the understanding the Nur-i-Muhammad. This is where *Bismi-Llāhi-r-Rahmāni-r-Rahīm* was born. That is why it is everywhere in our life, and why it is always said first. Every prophet, saint, and mystic was created out of that same light. That light distinguishes

them from the common person. Yet at the same time, they are each a product of the union of two human beings, of attraction (*jadhbb*), of love, penetration into the womb, the beginning of life itself. Allah ﷻ said, “I know that which you do not know” when He created the human life, which is the carrier of the Nur-i-Muhammad. When we begin to understand this, we begin to see the thread of the truth of light that runs between all the Prophets, and all of Allah's *awliyyaa'*, and great teachers, regardless of the tradition or lineage. When we understand this, we understand why everything begins and ends with the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, why he is the seal of the Prophets, and why I, too, will begin and end my talk today with the Nur-i-Muhammad.

TRADITION OF THE NUR-I-MUHAMMAD

Before I speak about the life of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ I would like to take some more time to tell you about the significance and traditions around the Nur-i-Muhammad. Unlike the life and physical presence of the Prophet, which is no longer accessible to us, the Nur-i-Muhammad continues to emanate through our lives and our universes, and thus is accessible and relevant to us, here today, and every day, every moment.

For Islamic scholars, this light is more than a mere symbol. According to some accounts, when Allah created Adam, He placed on Adam's forehead a pearl-like light, which shone like a sun in daytime and like a moon in nighttime. This light was passed on to his pregnant wife Hawa and then on to Seth. The father and the mother of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ were the final link of the light, which had passed from a hundred people, fifty of whom were male, and the other fifty female.

Ibn Ishaq (d. 150/767) speaks about a woman who tried to seduce Abdullah, the father of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ just before he married his wife Amina. After Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was conceived, Abdullah saw the same woman, yet the woman turned her face away. When he asked her why the woman replied, “The light I saw on you has forsaken you today.” According to Ibn Ishaq, this woman had seen a bright mark between the eyes of Abdullah, which disappeared after Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was conceived. It is even said that the ancestors of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ had been informed about his arrival by means

of a light or glowing trees being perceived in their dreams. Abdul Muttalib, the grandfather of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, was sleeping in Hijr when he suddenly awoke startled and said:

'In my dream, I saw a silver chain coming out of my back. This chain had four ends. One end stretched to the east, one to the west, one end to the depths of the sky, and the other end stretched to the depths of the earth. While I was looking at this chain, it turned into a radiant green tree. While I was standing in this position, two old men passed by. To one of the men I said: 'Who are you?'

He replied 'I am Noah, the prophet of Almighty God.'

To the other man I said: 'And who are you?'

He replied: 'I am one dear to Almighty God.' And then I woke up.

The Qurayshi oracles interpreted this dream, saying "...it means that a prophet will emerge from your descendants; everybody on earth and in the sky will have faith in him. The links of the chains are interconnected, which shows that the subjects and the helpers of the prophet will become abundant and strong. The transformation of the chain into a tree shows that the religion brought by this prophet will last forever and that he will have a high level of honor."

Prophet Muhammad said, "There is no denying this. I am a prophet. I am the grandson of Abdul Muttalib." He was speaking of Abdul Muttalib's dream.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ also recounted his mother's dream during her pregnancy with him, saying:

When Adam was still mud, I was assigned by Allah as *khatamu-n-nabiyyin* (the last of the Prophets). I will show you my first signs now. They are my father's prayer, good news of Isa, and the dream my mother had when she was pregnant. In that dream, my mother saw a light emitting from her that illuminated the castles of Damascus.

The Nur-i-Muhammad is a topic returned to again and again by the saints and teachers of our Orders as a source of inspiration, understanding, and connection with the Love of the Divine. Sahl ibn Abdullah Tustari (d. 283/896) is considered to be the first Sufi to have used the Nur-i-Muhammadi approach within Sufi literature. Tustari suggested that Allah had created Muhammad for the first time from His own light, and he pointed out that the Muhammadi presence existed before the presence of the universe. This he interpreted from this 'ayat of Surah al-Baqarah:

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً

WA'IDh QĀLA RABBUKA LI-L-MALĀ'IKATI INNI JĀ'ILUŉ FI-L-'ARDI KHALĪFATAN...

Before Allah created Adam, He said unto the angels: I am to place a viceroy on earth [and He created Adam from the mud of excellence and from the light of the Muhammad]. [2:30]

In the thirteenth century, Yunus Emre set out in the following verses, speaking of the Nur-i-Muhammad and his light's existence before the universe:

*He created Muhammad seventy thousand years earlier.
He loved Muhammad himself, the excuse is a star.
That star had the soul of Adam in it.
Even before the names of the Prophets were known,
Scholars would not know this, not even the most intelligent of them.
This is Divine guidance made known to Yunus through his master.
The Earth and the Heavens were created for the sake of Muhammad.
"Had it not been for you" is the proof that the Earth and Heavens
would not have existed without him.*

Maulana Jellaludin Rumi رumi, in his Masnavi, interpreted the *hadith*, "If you had not existed, I would not have created the heavens" by writing these verses:

Love boils the sea like clay. Love smashes and melts the mountains like sand.

Love ruptures the sky, opening hundreds of cracks. Love shakes the earth with no reason.

The immaculate love was equivalent to Prophet Muhammad...

Because of love, God said to him "If you had not existed..."

He was solely of love; thus, God selected him from among the prophets.

If you had not been of immaculate love, if you had not possessed love, would I have created the heavens?

I glorified the divine sky for you to understand the divinity of love.

For you to smell the scent of the contemptibleness of lovers, I completely degraded the soil and stretched it under mankind.

For you to understand how a poor one changes with love, I gave the soil greenery and freshness.

These unmovable mountains speak to you of the perseverance of lovers.

In the following verses, Abdurrahman Jami رحمه الله expresses how the light of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was transformed into a source of life for all the Prophets, from Adam (as) to Jesus (as):

His light was seen on the forehead of Adam, therefore the angels prostrated their heads.

In the hazards of the flood, Noah received his help in his tiny ark.

His scent of goodness reached Ibrahim, and from Nimrod's wood bloomed his rose.

Yusef was just a servant, worth seventeen drachmas in the palace of grace.

His face illuminated Musa's fire. His lips taught Isa how to resurrect the dead.

This is the Nur-i-Muhammad. This is as it was understood by those who saw and felt and tasted.

NUR-I-MUHAMMAD: A MERCY TO MANKIND

To understand the essential meaning as well as the intellectual meaning of the Nur-i-Muhammad, we have to begin with the knowledge that the essence (*dhat*) of Allah ﷻ is really impossible to know by logical proof or explanation. So give it up! Don't try. In Surah ash-Shura, it says,

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ

لَهُ مَقَالِيدُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ إِنَّهُ

بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

... LAYSA KAMITHLIHI SHAY'UNW-WA HUWA-S-SAMI'U-L-BASIR.

LAHU MAQALIDU-S-SAMAWATI WA-L-'ARDI
YAB'SUTU-R-RIZQA LIMA'NY-YASHAA'U WA
YAQ'DIRU INNAHU BIKULLI SHAY'IN 'ALIM.

...There is nothing like Him—and He is the Hearing, the Seeing.

To Him belong the keys to the heavens and the earth. He enlarges the provisions for whom He chooses or He cuts it. He is the Knower of all things. [42:11-12]

When Allah ﷻ wanted to create the world, He began it by certain limitations of His Own Knowledge of His Own Self. Through His intention and will, *iradah*, He brought it about. As we know from Surah Maryam:

... سُبْحَانَهُ إِذَا قَضَىٰ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ

... SUB'HANAHAHU IDHA QADA AMRAN FA'INNAMAYAQULU LAHU KUN FA-YAKUN.

... limitless is He in His Glory. When He orders anything to be, He says, "BE!" and it is. [19:35]

The implication of this phrase is far more than 'be and it became.' It also embraces the meanings of concealment, covering, sheltering, to keep secret, to calm and quiet, to be hidden. This is the secret of these tri-literal roots. If you read two things—Qur'an, and Hans Weir (Arabic Dictionary) or Lane (Lexicon)—even if you don't

understand Arabic, you begin to understand the roots. You begin to get this inspiration, moment by moment. "Be and it became." It implies, linguistically, concealment, covering, sheltering, to keep secret, to be calm, quiet and to be hidden. From this place of essential calm and hidden-ness, the Word and the Light emerge. The first expression of this Divine word was the creation or manifesting of the *tajalli bari ta'ala* (the lucent manifestation of Allah), which is referred to as the "*kalama qadim*," the "ancient word." The first word, the first Divine Name was an emanation of pure, previously uncreated light. Allah says in Qur'an:

اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

ALLĀHU NŪRU-S-SAMĀWĀTI WA-L-'ARD.

Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth. [24:35]

This light was, in a sense, the expression, the breath of Allah ﷻ, *nafas*—a breath of light, not air. Air exists on the earth. You will find very few planets with air, yet He is *Rabbi-l-Aalameen*. You will find very few planets without light. Light is the measure of our universe. We measure distance and time by light. Life itself can only exist when light is present. This light of Allah ﷻ, Nur-i-Allah, which is the breath of Allah ﷻ, is called *Nafas ar-Rahmaan*, the breath of the All Merciful. Don't mistake it for our breathing, because when this breath stops, the Light is still going on in the grave, because life is still going on in the grave. This first breath was the inception of what we know as existence. It contained the totality of the universe in its potentiality, in all of its forms and names and characteristics, just like the Big Bang contained all matter in the universe. Thus, this Divine emanation coming from the All Merciful begins the expression of this creation and all other planes of creation. It is dynamic, the animating power that gives light, and sustenance, and sustains every form, every reality, and every manifestation, every construct, animate or inanimate, every stone, every rock, every mineral, every living thing, and every aggregation of living things, every galaxy, and every universe.

The most basic Divine Name, and the first lucent manifestation, was *ar-Rahmaan ar-Raheem*. It is out of the Mercy of Allah that this creation takes place and that we live. He, Allah ﷻ, says of the Prophet ﷺ "I created you as a Mercy for all the worlds." Worlds! Plural. It is reflected in the root of the word *Raheem*, which is of course, *rahm*, the womb. All creation comes from the womb. It was indeed from the womb of the name "Allah ﷻ" that all other names evolved, each one having its unique characteristics. Just like a child has its own unique characteristics, but it is made up of the exact same DNA and genetic coding that every other human being has. Each has its own unique essence, its own unique life and existence. No two are exactly the same, not even twins. There are no two names that are exactly the same. They are all aggregated in the womb we call Allah ﷻ. Allah says in Surah al-A'raf,

...وَرَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ...

... RAḤMATĪ WASI'AT KULLA SHAY'IN...

...My mercy encompasses all things... [7:156]

which brings us back to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ because, as we know, in Surah al-Anbiyaa Allah tells us:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

WA MĀ ARSALNĀKA ILLĀ RAḤMATAL-LI-L-'ĀLAMĪN.

And We have not sent you except as a mercy to all the worlds. [21:107]

Thus, this very first light becomes the mercy that is the Prophet ﷺ. What is the nature of Allah's Mercy? It has the same qualities of Nur-i-Muhammad. It is a light you can access, or not access, but is always there. It is the eternal light from which you can light endless candles. It never gets smaller or diminishes. The essence of Allah, just like the rays of the sun, borrows from the essence, or they borrow

from the reality of the existence of the sun. You can follow the rays back to the source of light in the sky. In that same way, all mysticism, i.e. *Tasawwuf*, is a return to the treasure of the name **ar-Rahmaan ar-Raheem**, which is the beginning of light and which is the first name, the manifest name of the Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ light.

FLASHES OF LIGHT: MOMENTS AND EXAMPLES

I have been speaking, until now, about the light that becomes the Prophet, the Nur-i-Muhammad, and about his reality as a Mercy to Mankind, as well as the foundational essence that affirms his existence through all time. But how was that light manifest in word, action, thought, and example in the life of the Prophet ﷺ? Who was the Prophet ﷺ as a man, as a leader, as a father, as an example? In no way can we speak about all the aspects of his life, his teachings, his prophecy today; this is the study of a lifetime. Instead, I will give you a few small "snapshots" of this remarkable human being—existing on a light that is eternal, bright flashes of light, if you will, told in stories and examples of the character of the Prophet ﷺ and his life. *Inshaa'a-Llah*, we can take these snapshots with us beyond this room and allow them to brighten and illuminate our own lives. For pictures evoke fond memories and transport us back in time to events of our past, or project us forward to places we wish to see and experience.

Respect and Dignity

How aware are we of the limitless ability of the Prophet ﷺ to love and respect others, without distinction of race or creed?

Following the Battle of Badr, a Meccan by the name of 'Umayr ibn Wahb of the Quraysh came to Medina, intent upon killing the Prophet ﷺ. As he approached the mosque where the Prophet ﷺ was, Umar ibn al-Khattab ؓ took note of his sword and moved to stop him. But the Prophet ﷺ called to Umar to let the man enter. Inviting Umayr to sit near him, he began to speak to the would-be assassin with great affection, kindness, and sweetness. Then, he recounted in exact detail the assassination plot that he and an accomplice had devised. 'Umayr was astonished, for they were the

only two who had known of their intentions. So impressed was he by the Prophet's insight and generosity that he accepted Islam. Nebi Muhammad ﷺ neither reprimanded nor punished 'Umayr for having set out to kill him.

What kind of power lies in an individual who could unify enemies and strangers? How many people in the history of humanity have remained a major global force more than 1400 years after their passing? Clearly, we are discussing a person of strength and courage, gentleness and concern.

Make things Easy

Not only in words but in deeds, the Prophet ﷺ was true to the guidance: **"Make things easy, not difficult."** He avoided attending the Taraweeh prayer one night because he did not want to place an undue burden on the believers. He arrived at the mosque, saw the people gathered, and retreated to his quarters, for he realized that if he did the prayer every evening, it would be interpreted as a *farḍ*. On another occasion, when Mu'adh ؓ extended the congregational prayer, the Prophet ﷺ said, "O Mu'adh! Are you putting the people on trial?" He repeated this three times, ensuring that Mu'adh understood his disapproval of straining people.

Care and Concern

He continually guided his *sahābah* to express care and concern towards all people. A man asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ, "O Messenger of Allah! How am I to know whether I did good or bad?" The Prophet ﷺ said,

Idhaa samf'ta jiiraanaka yaquuluuna qad ahsanta faqad ahsanta; wa'idhaa samf'tum yaquuluuna qad asa'ta faqad asa'ta.

When you hear your neighbors say, "You have done good," then you have done good; and when you hear them say, "You have done bad," then you have certainly done bad.

Putting Others First

The Holy Prophet ﷺ had so much mercy for others that he was pained whenever he saw anyone in need, and thought always of others before himself. In the battle of Uhud, when the Prophet ﷺ was struck in the face and his teeth were broken, he said:

**O, Allah! Forgive my companions for abandoning me.
They are ignorant. I remain with them, because I am
Your servant and slave, in order to illumine their hearts.**

If we aspire to be counted among the lovers of Nebi Muhammad ﷺ, then surely we must contemplate, humbly and sincerely, where we stand in the long shadow of the Prophet ﷺ. How do we act towards our families and neighbors, let alone our enemies? How do we respond when we see others in pain, misery, grief, loss, and disbelief? Can it possibly be Muslims that are causing pain, and loss, and misery, and grief, and disbelief in Afghanistan or Syria or anywhere in this world? Can it possibly be followers of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ who would do that? Impossible! Impossible! This is not *takfeer*, this is the truth.

Love Unconditionally

Do we hesitate to love as the Prophet ﷺ loved? Perhaps we are too aware of the distrust with which kindness is likely to be met in this day and age. Distrust and suspicion also confronted the Prophet ﷺ, yet never deterred him from his mission. The Quraysh heaped hostility upon their kinsman, a man so patient, kind, tolerant, forgiving, and willing to suffer for others that he was intolerable to the likes of Abu Lahab and Abu Jahl. Even when Abu Jahl openly reviled him, the Prophet ﷺ could not be provoked. When Hamza beat Abu Jahl for insulting his nephew, the Prophet took no pleasure in it. He said to Hamza, *"I have nothing to do with revenge."*

Recently, in the news, a Syrian man said when asked why he was cutting the organ out of the Syrian soldier and biting into it? He thought it was the heart—a very bad physiologist. He didn't even know where the heart was! That tells you something. He said, "It is out of revenge for what they are doing to our women and children."

The Prophet ﷺ said what? **"I HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH REVENGE."** Khalas. That's it. Is that the attitude of many Muslims today? Resoundingly, no. Revenge and violence engulf communities in flames of hate and intolerance, flames of political desires, here and there... wherever *there* is; we know where *here* is.

The enthusiasm of the Prophet ﷺ for bringing the Love and the Truth of Allah ﷻ to the people was equaled by their resistance to it, but he did not alter his conviction; rather, the world changed around him. The Prophet was so far above pettiness, extreme behavior, selfishness, and personal greed that his love was transforming. People who had not been able to see, now saw. People who had not been willing to hear, now heard. Such was the *baraka* of Nebi Muhammad ﷺ. He woke people up.

Strength of Character

The Prophet's strength of character, values, and ethic became an irresistible inspiration to others. Just as it can be in today's fractured world.

Thumama bin Uthal of the Hanifah tribe was captured in battle and brought to the Prophet, who ordered him tied to a pillar of the mosque. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ came and asked him what he had to say about his attacks on Islam, he replied, **"O Muhammad, if you kill me, you will kill a murderer. If you are benevolent, you are benevolent to a grateful person. If you demand compensation, that person himself will pay for it."**

The Prophet said nothing and went away. The next day, he visited the mosque again. He asked the same question, and received the same answer. The scene repeated itself the following day. Having heard the identical reply three days in a row, the Prophet ﷺ ordered Thumama released. The latter was so impressed by this generous treatment that he did wuduu', returned to the mosque, and embraced Islam of his own free will.

The Prophet manifested the essential character (*fitrah*) of the human being. It is "the natural disposition or inborn, intuitive ability to discern between right and wrong, true and false, not to be influenced by circumstance, and [thus] to sense God's existence and oneness." (Asad 621) In so doing, he drew forth the essential character of the individuals who came into contact with him. Like a magnet, the *fitrah* in the light of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is drawn out of us. Through his *hubb*, he evoked and continues to evoke the *habbaa*—the seeds of Allah ﷻ—planted in us.

Simple Kindness

One unravels the complexity of life through the simplicity of the Prophet ﷺ. Moreover, by looking at Nebi Muhammad ﷺ, we deepen our awareness of our nearness to Allah. In a *hadith qudsi* that we are all familiar with, Allah ﷻ said:

...My servant continues to draw near to Me with supererogatory works so that I shall love him. When I love him, I am the ears with which he hears, the eyes with which he sees, the hands with which he strikes, and the feet with which he walks.

We see this most clearly in Nebi Muhammad ﷺ. The Prophet was a conduit for the Attributes of Allah ﷻ as they are expressed in Allah's creation. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ spent his days toiling in the world and spent his nights in prayer and *fikr*. Nebi Muhammad ﷺ is the bridge between the absoluteness of the Truth that is Allah, and the relative truth as we manifest it in *dunya*. He was continually responsive to the unique demands of each circumstance.

On one occasion, a man came to confess a sin and receive the punishment due him. The Prophet ﷺ ordered him to free a slave. The man replied that he had no slaves to free. The Prophet said that he should fast for two months. He said he was too weak to do that. The Prophet instructed him to provide food for all the poor, but he said he did not have the means to do so. Then the Prophet ﷺ said, "Please wait here." After some time, a person came with a basket of dates for the

Prophet ﷺ. The Prophet ﷺ gave them to the man, telling him to use them to feed the poor. "Am I to give them to someone poorer than I?" the man asked. "For I swear by Allah, there is no one poorer than my family!" The Prophet ﷺ laughed. Then he told the sinner, "Give the dates to your family, and eat!"

Nowhere do we find evidence of rigidity or dogmatism in the behavior of the Prophet ﷺ; rather, we find testimony that the most effective "law enforcement" takes place with gentleness and kindness, with sweet words, encouragement, and models of what it means to live a principled life, models for what it means to live an ethical life, while covering the faults of others. Today, our *ummah* is plagued with *takfeer*, rigidity, factionalism, and excessive concern with details, and no concern at all with ethics. All such attitudes and behaviors belie a lack of confidence in one's own faith. If Allah has enough faith in us to give us the responsibility of the *khalifat* and the power to make choices, then surely we need to have the faith in ourselves to be able to go beyond doctrinaire approaches and cultural sectarianism. Where is it that Allah says, "I need you?"

Kind Words

Love achieves what cannot be accomplished by force, for it is a gentle breeze that touches human souls. One of the simplest forms of love is kind speech. The Qur'an states:

وَقُلْ لِعِبَادِي يَقُولُوا الَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ يَنْزِعُ بَيْنَهُمْ إِنَّ
الشَّيْطَانَ كَانَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ عَدُوًّا مُبِينًا

WA QUL LI'IBADI YAQULU ALLATI HIYA
AHSANU INNA-SH-SHAYTANA YANZAGHU
BAYNAHUM INNA-SH-SHAYTANA KANA LI-L-
'INSAANI 'ADUWWAM-MUBINA.

And tell My servants that they should speak in the most kindly manner [unto those who do not share their

beliefs]; verily, Satan is always ready to stir up discord between people, for, verily, Satan is an open foe! [17:53]

Our beloved Prophet ﷺ proved the power of soft and gentle language to reach the hearts of others.

Once a group of Jews in Medina greeted Nebi Muhammad ﷺ by saying, "As-samu 'alaykum," which means, "Death be upon you." Aisha رضي الله عنها grew angry and retorted, "May death be upon you, and curses!" The Prophet ﷺ disapproved of what Aisha رضي الله عنها had said, commenting,

Inna-Llaaha yuhibu-r-rifqa fi-l-amri kulih.

Truly, Allah loves kindness in everything.

Allah ﷻ loves kindness in everything, from everyone, in every circumstance. Even if there is no kindness in return, still, there should be kindness.

Taking Account

How can we model ourselves after the example of Nebi Muhammad ﷺ? A key tool is conscious reflection, encompassed in the Islamic concept of *muhaasabah*. *Muhaasabah* literally means to reckon, to reconcile, or to take an account of (as in balancing an organization's financial accounts).

Qaala Rasuulu-Llaah (salawaatu-Llaahi wa salaamuhu 'alayh): *haasibu 'anfusakum qabala an tuhaasibu wa zinu 'a'malakum qabala 'an tuuzanu 'alaykum.*

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Account for your 'selves' before you are accounted. Weigh your actions before your actions become a weight upon you."

The Prophet ﷺ said,

No one will commit a sin, then get up and purify himself, then pray, then ask Allah's forgiveness without Allah forgiving him. (Tirmidhi)

Then he recited,

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا فَعَلُوا فَاحِشَةً أَوْ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا لِذُنُوبِهِمْ... أُولَئِكَ جَزَاءُهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ ...

WA-LLADHĪNA IDHĀ FA-ʿALŪ FA-AḤISHATAN AW DHĀLAMŪ AṢFUSAḤUM DHĀKARŪ ALLĀHA FA-STAGHFARŪ LIDHUNŪBIHIM ... ULĀA'IKA JAZĀA'UHUM MAGHFIRATUM-MIR-RABBIHIM...

And those who, when they do something to be ashamed of or wrong themselves, remember Allah and ask forgiveness for their sins...the reward of such will be forgiveness from their Lord... (Qur'an 3:135-6)

Muhaasabatu-n-nafs entails the examination of one's self, of one's intentions, decisions, actions, and conscience. *Muhaasabah* also has a collective implication. Let me return again to the *ayat*:

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا...

WA KADHĀLIKA JAʿALNĀKUM UMMATAN-Ō-WASATAL-LITAKŪNŪ SHUHADĀAʿA ʿALĀ-N-NĀSI WA YAKŪNA-R-RASŪLU ʿALAYKUM SHAḤIDĀA...

And thus We made you a middle nation (*ummata wasata*) to be witnesses to mankind, and the Messenger is a witness to you... (2:143)

Allah ﷻ tells us that the Messenger ﷺ is going to be a witness to all Muslims. This suggests that Muslims as a collective entity would be

wise to assess how well they are following the message brought by the Prophet ﷺ—not just each Muslim. We are brought together as *ummah* (we are back to the mother again), and we are sitting in *jam'at*. It's not just "my" relationship with Allah, but my relationship to Allah and *all of us*. If the "us" is just this small group of people, then that is who it is. However you define "the community" in any moment, we have to have that collective *muhaasabah*. Can you imagine if each one of us sitting here, somewhere in our consciousness was making *muhaasabah*, collectively, the power of that?

FINDING THE LIGHT

I have shared with you a few of the many examples of the compassion, articulate leadership, and noble character of the Prophet ﷺ and I we hope are all inspired by his example. But as much as we can tell and re-tell the stories of his life, there is always something missing in our attempts to bring to life his example. Just as I can describe to you in the greatest detail a fantastic waterfall or a perfect sunset, unless you are there feeling the ground beneath your feet, hearing the sounds, feeling the mist on your face, watching every tiny detail with your own eyes; unless and until you experience it, the image is flat and two dimensional. It does not live inside of you until you have experienced it. How then do we find the light and the character of the Prophet ﷺ within ourselves? How do we make it alive, vibrant, and glowing within us? To answer this, I return to where I began today, to the Nur-i-Muhammad.

By seeking to understand the Nur-i-Muhammad, those who have followed him over the centuries – the *awliyaa' Allaah*, the seekers, the *shayukh* – have the opportunity to gain the most intimate nearness and knowledge of Allah ﷻ that one can gain in this life. Bayazid Bistami sought Allah through his study and reflection on the Nur-i-Muhammad, as he retraced the step of the Prophet's ﷺ Night Journey. He said, recounting his own experience:

I continued to fly, kingdom after kingdom, veil after veil, domain after domain, sea after sea, curtain after curtain, until I ended up at a throne. And I was received by angels with eyes as numerous as stars in the heavens. From each eye there was a flashing of a light that would

illuminate the viewer. Those lights became lamps, and from the interior of the lamps, I heard chants of Divine unity. I continued to fly like that until I ended up at a sea of light with crashing waves. Alongside it, the light of the sun was darkened.

He experienced the *mdrifah* of the heart. Light is attracted to the heart, and the heart is attracted to the light, like the moth to the flame. Light is the means through which Allah communicates the unique and special *mdrifah* / knowledge of Himself. But it is not just a communication of knowledge; it is a transforming gift, a transmutation, if you will, of a person's heart by coming into contact with the Essence (*dhat*) of Allah. Bayazid Bistami ﷺ describes what he calls "*the topography of light, a map of a landscape of light, discovered on his journey, a journey of light, in light, and of light, and a light that outshines any sun by exponential levels of light.*" He arrives at this *fanaa' fee Allah*. He realizes that the light of Allah is endless, and that light is the Nur-i-Muhammad. There is no way to get to that light without Nur-i-Muhammad—no way. There are no boundaries, like the stars in the night sky above us have no boundaries, except what we put around them. These are the prophets and their luminosity, and their transparency, and their translucency. Endless light pours into them, and endless light pours out of them, generation upon generation.

Light is the essential reality of substance that we can identify with Allah ﷻ. Outside of the attributes that we are familiar with in the '*alam al khalq* is the light from the '*alam al amr*. We would be very unaware of light, if it were light all the time. We need darkness to wake up to the light. This light is what distinguishes the true from the untrue, the real from the false, the good from the bad, the arrogant from the truly powerful. It is the substance of Divine truth. When we see it expressed, it is the creative power of that truth. We see it expressed in the physical forms, and even in our human life. The beautiful language that Bayazid Bistami's ﷺ uses to describe his experience of light takes us right back to the prophetic light itself. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, like all the *ambiyaa'* before him, and all the *awliyaa' Allaah*, drank deeply of the Divine emanation / *sayd* / effulgent light. That light flavors the quality of prophetic insight, and has the ability in its endlessness to pour forth as this *sayd*, as this Divine Presence. Allah is present in the moment of light, yet we

don't see the origin of the light, nor do we see the end of it. We only see the moment.

ILLUMINATION OF THE HEART

Most teachers, most scholars agree that the most famous and the most important verse about light is the one we find in Qur'an, in Surah an-Nuur, *ayat* 35. In this *ayat* one finds the essence of this Nur-i-Muhammad and the central pillar of the mysticism of Islam.

اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ مِثْلُ نُورِهِ كَمِشْكَاةٍ فِيهَا مِصْبَاحٌ
الْمِصْبَاحُ فِي زُجَاجَةٍ الزُّجَاجَةُ كَأَنَّهَا كَوْكَبٌ دُرِّيٌّ يُوقَدُ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ
مُبَارَكَةٍ زَيْتُونَةٍ لَا شَرْقِيَّةٍ وَلَا غَرْبِيَّةٍ يَكَادُ زَيْتُهَا يُضِيءُ وَلَوْ لَمْ
تَمْسَسْهُ نَارٌ نُورٌ عَلَى نُورٍ يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ...

ALLĀHU NŪRU-S-SAMĀWĀTI WA-L-'ARDI
MATHĀLU NŪRIHI KAMISHKĀTIN FIHĀ
MIŠBĀHUN AL-MIŠBĀHU FĪ ZUJĀJATIN-Z-
ZUJĀJATU KĀNNAHĀ KAWKABUN DURRIYYUN-
YUQADU MIN SHAJARATIM-MUBĀRAKATIN
ZAYTUNATIL-LĀ SHARQIYYATINW-WALĀ
GHARBIYYATIN-YAKĀDU ZAYTUHĀ YUDĪ'U WA
LAW LAM TAMSAS-HU NĀRUN NŪRUN 'ALĀ
NŪRIŶY-YAHDĪ ALLĀHU LINŪRIHI MĀNY-
YASHĀA'U ...

Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. A likeness of His Light is a niche in which there is a lamp, the lamp is within a glass, the glass is like [a] pearly white star lit from [the oil of] a blessed tree—an olive tree—neither of the East nor of the West, whose oil all but glows, though no fire touches it. Light upon light; Allah guides to His Light whom He chooses. [24:35]

The *suurah* of light gives us one of the beautiful metaphors in Qur'an on the essence of the Nur-i-Muhammad. When this light starts

shining upon the regions of the heart, the lamp of the heart gets lit. The light has a special effect. When it is lit, there are certain parts of the heart that provide spiritual desire to return to Allah, *sayr ilaa-Llah*. Lighting these little fires or lights in the heart is like lighting the lamp in a niche. One touch of the *awliyyaa' Allah*, or *wali*, or *shayekh* can awaken the Nur-i-Muhammad in us. Just like the darkness is dispelled by light, so too in the heart, when the heart becomes illumined, doubts and uncertainties are expelled. In the Naqshbandi Order we say, "*Doubts and uncertainties are to be expected; these I will overcome once I understand why they exist.*" We only know why things exist by the light of the things we know. When we say that, we understand that it is our duty to investigate, to turn our attention, to pay attention, *mutawwajuh*. Once the light goes on in the heart, you understand what you didn't understand before; and perhaps you feel a little ashamed that you didn't understand it before.

Sometimes I think people don't want the light to go on, don't want to understand, because they don't want to give up the "comfort" of the dark, the comfort of their sureness of not understanding, the comfort of doubting—they don't even know they are doubting—the comfort that keeps them from the challenge. Even sometimes we say, the comfort of misery: the "sweet misery" of it all. How strange that is, when you hear it said. But how many people live, embracing the misery of their lives, obsessed by the misery of their lives, obsessed, compelled to create it time and time again, because they just won't take the time to pay attention. We say, "*Main mutawwajuh boom qalb ki taraf, qalb mutawwajuh be zat pak ki taraf*" in each *lateefah*, and just to take the time to pay attention. But they want the *baraka* of the *shayekh*. They want the intellectual excitement of it all. They want *subhat*, but *subhat* that doesn't demand too much of them.

When this first light comes, it shines within the deepest recesses of the heart with such purity that it unleashes the lightning bolts of Divine discoveries, and this lightning generates thunderclouds of meaning. What happens when lightning strikes in the night? You get a flash of light. It doesn't sustain but for a second, and you wait for the next light to come. You say, "Did I see that?" You wish you could just flip the light on. Well, you can. When that light is lit, then you begin to see. You discover or uncover because the light is so pure. Nothing can compare to that Divine light, which defies being

understood rationally, intellectually, and can only be experienced. When our *ruh* calls out to return, it has to follow the light back to its source. We say that when we sleep, the *ruh* returns to Allah, leaving a thin thread. A thin thread of what? A thin thread of light. The one who points to that source is Muhammad ﷺ, and we follow the trail of the Nur-i-Muhammad.

SEEING WITH AND THROUGH LIGHT

In the early days of Tasawwuf, people like Al-Hallaj, and Rabi'a al Adawiyya, and Kushari, and Dhul Nun, and Mohasabi, and others rarely told about their inner journey; yet, you find references to light throughout their writings. Even though light is often used as a metaphor / *majaaz* in the sense of trying to illuminate an idea, or a realization, or certain truth, or the state of attainment of some mystical state, it's not just a metaphor. I will end today by speaking about our own ability to experience a moment of illumination by the light of Allah. Enlightenment (whatever that is; we know it has to do with light), even if it's only a moment of illumination, is so deeply real and personal, revealing, creative, uplifting, penetrating that we never forget it. We remember: penetrating... *dhikr*. A moment of illumination, and you never forget it. It extinguishes everything in that moment: all a person's darkness, or doubts, or fears or worries.

How many of you drive a car? How many of you have driven from one place to another, gotten there, and said, "How did I get here? I don't remember anything—nothing. I don't remember stopping at the stop light, the car in front of me. I don't remember anything I saw—nothing." You are driving along, and all of a sudden a ball rolls out into the road. You are in that state of not remembering. All of a sudden, the ball rolls out into the road. You are fully present. You saw the ball; you put the brakes on. You look for the child to follow the ball into the road. Even though you were driving, and you think you weren't present, you were present. You're just not remembering. Now you take the step to remember. You remember Allah ﷻ. You have the faith and knowledge that you are in the Ocean of *Rahmat*—never out of it.

Basir an-nur means seeing with the inner light. In that light, one sees and understands and comprehends the spiritual essence, the spiritual

meaning of things. One no longer understands just the outer meaning, but one also understands the inner meaning of things. What is and what has yet to become, becomes consciously distinguished. One becomes aware that they have attained a glimpse, a moment. We call it an *Am*: a period of time with the Truth, *al-Haqq*. All of these names and attributes are moments. Light or illumination is both the means by which Allah communicates this knowledge, and is also the gift of His own essence. The bearer of news brings news, and IS the news. The messengers came, and they bore a message, but the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, as the Nur-i-Muhammad, IS the message. The message and the messenger are one. Shaykh Shattah, Ruzbihan Baqli of Shiraz, one of the mystics of the 12th century, wrote the following passage about the light of the prophecy, and how that light entered into these pure individuals whom we call prophets and messengers, illuminating their sight and vision.

Then I wanted to learn what was beyond the veil, so I went to the edge of the veil. When I reached it, I saw coming from beyond the veil a great light. And I saw a person like the moon from head to foot. His face was like the face of the moon, and he was greater than the heavens in their entirety. The person had seized the whole Divine Presence. There was not a point as big as the head of a pin that was not filled with it. There was also upon his face a continuous light from the Divine Presence without interruption. I wanted to go in beyond the veil, but was unable to do so. So I said to myself, "What place is this, and who is this person?" And a call came into my consciousness, "This is the praiseworthy station, and that is Muhammad. And that which you see on his face is the light of manifestation."

All the prophets and all the *awliya'* partake of the prophetic *fiyḍ*, that light that emanates, that continuous light that flows through the prophets, that Divine Presence. He goes on to explain how this vision of the Nur-i-Muhammad illuminated and melted his heart.

He manifested himself within me, and from the vision of his face came the sweetness of longing, the melting of spirit, the agitation of the shattering of the heart, and the annihilation of the intellect. If an atom of this befall the mountains of the earth, they would melt from sweetness. I was sighing, weeping, turning, and sobbing, and Allah took me into

this angelic realm. He placed me at the door of eternity, and then He manifested Himself to me as Greatness and Magnificence. I saw light upon light, glory upon glory, power upon power, and I cannot describe it. I was unable to proceed a step closer because of His Majesty and Power. If I looked at it forever, I would have been unable to understand an atom in the likeness of any pre-eternal qualities. Allah is beyond any description.

What he has taken is this journey in Allah, *sayr fee-Llaah*; toward Allah, *sayr ilaa-Llaah*; accompanied by Allah, *sayr ma'a-Llaah*; *adanitya*—the sublime melting or attention that makes it all real in the moment. Looking outwardly, we see all the qualities of Allah ﷻ and all the names of all creation. But looking at all that is transpiring inwardly, we see it is also comprised of that same *dhat* / essence and that same *nuur*. Jelaluddin Rumi tries to explain this state as: “*Holding a candle up to the light of the sun. Although the candle exists, in relationship to the sun, it has no existence.*” The *ruuh*, which is light, becomes non-existent in the light of the Face of Allah ﷻ. We have our existence, but in relationship to the Divine light, we have no existence. In light of the prophecy and understanding the prophecy, in light of that Nur-i-Muhammad reasoning stops, explanations stop, questionings stop. The knower comprehends directly without the aid of intellect, without the aid of language, or of anything other than the greatest knowledge. The self comes into themselves from that one truth/reality. The knower comprehends directly. He draws his knowledge and inspiration from the light of that reveal-ation: revelation. What is revealed? It means it was always there.

LIGHT IN OUR HEARTS

There is a common belief among the Christians that people were born in sin. It is absolutely not true. We are born of and in that Light of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. I don't believe this because I was told this. I don't believe it because I learned it at the feet of my Shaykh one day. I believe it because over time I have come to understand it. It is a light that is extending and existing and never ending. This knowledge is light, but it has to be inner knowledge. If you don't give yourself to the knowledge, if you don't trust that knowledge, then what are you doing? You are making up your own religion. You are making up your own pathway; and if you do that, it is

circuitous. It leaves you and comes back to you, but it never goes beyond it.

This first eternal light is the light that we return to, that we can come to understand in ourselves, the light of the prophecy and the first name of Allah: *ar-Rahmaan ar-Raheem*. We are all familiar with prayer ascribed to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ for light. Abu Talib al Makki quoted it, and Imam al Ghazali taught it extensively. Mir Dard, the 18th century Sufi mystic, quoted it, and taught it as his last orison before his own passing. That *difa'a* is this:

اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْ فِي قَلْبِي نُورًا وَفِي لِسَانِي نُورًا وَفِي سَمْعِي نُورًا وَفِي بَصَرِي نُورًا وَعَنْ
يَمِينِي نُورًا وَعَنْ يَسَارِي نُورًا وَمِنْ فَوْقِي نُورًا وَمِنْ تَحْتِي نُورًا وَمِنْ أَمَامِي نُورًا وَمِنْ
خَلْفِي نُورًا وَاجْعَلْ لِي فِي نَفْسِي نُورًا وَأَعْظَمْ لِي نُورًا. وَاجْعَلْ لِي نُورًا وَ
اجْعَلْ لِي نُورًا

اللَّهُمَّ اغْنِنِي نُورًا وَاجْعَلْ فِي أَغْصَانِي نُورًا وَفِي لَحْمِي نُورًا وَفِي دَمِي نُورًا وَفِي
شَعْرِي نُورًا وَفِي بَشَرِي نُورًا وَزِدْنِي نُورًا وَزِدْنِي نُورًا وَزِدْنِي نُورًا وَهَبْ لِي نُورًا
عَلَى نُورٍ

Allaahumma-j'al fee qalbee nuuran, wa fee lisaanee nuuran, wa fee sam'ee nuuran, wa fee bagaree nuuran, wa 'an yameenee nuuran, wa 'an yasaaree nuuran, wa min fawqee nuuran, wa min tahtee nuuran, wa min amaamee nuuran, wa min khalfee nuuran. Wa-j'al lee fee nafsee nuuran, wa a'dhhdhim lee nuuran. Wa-j'al lee nuuran, wa-j'alnee nuuran.

Allaahumma a'tinee nuuran. Wa-j'al fee a'gaabee nuuran, wa fee lahmee nuuran, wa fee damee nuuran, wa fee sha'ree nuuran, wa fee basharatee nuuran. Wa-zidnee nuuran, wa-zidnee nuuran, wa-zidnee nuuran. Wa hab lee nuuran 'alaa nuur.

O Allah, place light in my heart, light in my tongue, light in my hearing, light in my eyesight, light on my right hand, light on my left hand, light above me, light below me, light in front of me, light behind me. And place light in my soul, and give me abundant light. Make for me light, and make me a light.

O Allah, grant for me light, and place light in my nerves, and in my flesh light, and in my blood light, and in my hair light, and in my skin light. Increase me in light; increase me in light; increase me in light. And grant me light upon light.

This was the prayer; this is the teaching. This is the way to achieve love and nearness to the holy Prophet ﷺ, through his light. All creation is nothing but an expression of that everlasting light. This is the very great teaching of all the *shuyukh*, and the hidden secret of the Nur-i-Muhammad behind all prophecy. Shaykh al-Akbar said it this way:

*My heart has become capable of all forms:
For gazelles, a meadow; and for monks, a monastery,
A temple for idols, a pilgrim's Kd'bah,
The tablets of the Torah, the Book of the Qur'an.
I profess the religion of love, and whatever the direction taken by its
mount.
Love is my religion and my faith.*

Does it mean all religions are equal? No, it means it's all one truth. We are told and understand why it begins and ends with Muhammad ﷺ. It is the Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ life, love, and light that give rise to everything. What is the legacy of his love? Many people today sit, and pray, and do their recitation, and take their classes in Islam and in Arabic, *al-hamdu li-Llaah*. But who will spend 10 minutes or 20 minutes (let alone 40 minutes) twice a day that we strive for in *muraaqabah*, in reflection—or more accurately, polishing the mirror of the heart so that it can reflect the Nur-i-Muhammad. Who are they?

Everything I've told you in this *dars* is about finding the light. They can have *halaqahs* and talk to one another about *tafseer* of Qur'an, but

who will understand until they understand the light of *Rasuulu-Llaah*? You will not – cannot – understand it until you live the Qur'an, read the Qur'an, sit in *muraaqabah* and sit with Allah. No one can understand the light of *Rasuulu-Llaah* until they can enter into that place where, through *muraaqabah* and *tafakkur* and study of Qur'an, the veils are lifted. You won't see it anywhere else. You can go here or go there. Go to this place or that place, this retreat, this *dargah*, this *shaykh* or that *shaykh*. Go in health and enjoy yourself, but you need it like you need a hole in the head. You won't see it in any other religion. Even in Islam, we find more and more the same thing—ritual after ritual after ritual. The truth gets lost in the ritual. Ritual is fine, but where is it leading, and where is it coming from?

Many people have been born to Islam and taught to love the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. But how many understand the Nur-i-Muhammad? There are many things we can love that we don't understand. We can love our parents, and not understand them. We can love our children, and certainly do not understand them! We can love many things, but if we understand our self, we can understand the meaning of the light of *Rasuulu-Llaah* ﷺ in our life. And we can understand the reality of that light, and begin to see that light everywhere. Then we begin to understand. That light will take the form of many things. But we will know that when it took the form of *Rasuulu-Llaah* ﷺ, it became possible for the human being to take a journey outward and inward toward the Divine Light. From Him we came, and to Him we return, and in Him we live and die.

CLOSING DU^cAA

Allāhumma lā tada^c lanā fi maqāminā
Hādhā dhamban illā ghafartah.
Wa lā hamman illā farrajtah.
Wa lā daynan illā qa'aytah.
Wa lā maran illā shafaytah.
Wa lā muḥtalā illā 'āfaytah.
Wa lā mayyitan illā raḥimtah.
Wa lā 'aduwwan illā khadhiltah.
Wa lā ājatam min awā'ijid-dunyā wal
Ākhirati hiya laka riaw walanā
Fihā salāmun illā
A'antanā qaā'ahā wayassartahā.
Bi raḥmatika yā arḥamar rāḥimīn.

O Allah! Leave no sins of ours in this
assembly without being forgiven.
Nor any grief without being relieved,
Nor any debt without it being paid,
Nor any sick without it being healed,
Nor any affliction without it being recovered,
Nor any misguidance without guidance,
Nor any transgression without it being ceased,
Nor anyone has died without their sins being forgiven,
Nor any enemies without being humiliated,
Nor any difficulty without it being facilitated,
By Your mercy, O Most Merciful of the mercifuls.

Matlabee Yaa Habibee Laisa siwaak
Anta Matloobunaa Salaamun 'alaik
Sayyidee Yaa Habibee Maulaeee
Laka Roohi Fidaa Salaamun 'alaik

I don't wish for anyone else besides you, O my beloved.
You are the one we seek, salutations on you,
My leader, my beloved, my patron.